

QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE AND ACADEMIC ESTABLISHMENT*

While giving his own interpretation of knowledge in terms of social assent, as against the Cartesian interpretation in terms of individual assent, Professor W. H. Walsh refers to the charge which might be levelled against his view that it leads to making the world "safe for professors".¹ When 'knowledge' is considered with reference to an academic discipline, the view of Walsh would lead to the consequence, as Walsh himself accepts, "The academic Establishment must necessarily exercise... Ultimate jurisdiction on what is to count as knowledge."² Walsh is not worried about these consequences. He favours the view that "convincing the authorities" is a necessary condition for saying that one knows something, in spite of his awareness of the fact that "Galileo and Frege were not able to convince their fellow professors of the truth of their theories."³

What has led Walsh to refuse to consider the cases of Galileo and Frege as constituting an objection to his theory of knowledge? Is it because Galileo and Frege were themselves professors, hence part of the academic establishment? But how can one give testimonial to one's own work? How would such a testimonial obtain currency in society? It is for the sake of obtaining social currency for one's views that Walsh makes an appeal to the academic establishments. In academic matters social currency of a view means the same thing as currency in academic circles. Therefore, unless one's view obtains currency in academic circles one is not supposed to know even one's *own* view. If 'knowledge' is defined in terms of 'social assent', then a testimonial from society (academic establishment) is essential whether it is a question of knowing one's *own* view or knowing the views of *others*.

Does Walsh mean to say that the theories of Galileo and Frege did have some sort of social assent, though not the assent of the privileged persons responsible for the academic establishments? But so far as the academic matters are concerned the talk of social assent makes no sense unless it is certified by the academic establishment. The position of Walsh seems to be quite unclear on the relation of 'social assent' to the 'pursuit of knowledge'.

I feel that the view of Walsh, which favours the existence of academic establishments, itself suffers from the Cartesian bias, not in all but one of its forms. While commenting on the Cartesian influence over the thought of his fellow-philosophers Walsh says, "Despite everything that has been said in recent years about the shortcomings of Descartes, we still make a Cartesian approach to the problem of knowledge."⁴ I feel that despite everything that has been said by Walsh against Descartes, his approach to the problem of knowledge remains Cartesian. Just by defining or describing knowledge in terms of corporate activity one has not rejected Cartesianism in all its different forms.

The Cartesian influence on the thought of Walsh is clearly visible when Walsh proposes to have scientific respectability for our academic pursuits. There is no doubt that Walsh and Descartes disagree about the fashion in which one has to achieve scientific respectability. Scientific respectability for Descartes meant the same thing as logico-mathematical respectability, the respectability of an axiomatic system. The Cartesian principle of clarity and distinctness is meant for obtaining the axiomatic ideal for our scientific pursuits.⁵ But for Walsh it is not the axiomatic ideal but the corporate activity that exhibits the scientific character of a pursuit. However, this is a minor issue. So far as the fundamental issue is concerned the view of Walsh remains the same as that of Descartes.

In so far as the realm of *a priori*, necessary, truths is concerned the ideal of scientific respectability is fully realised. But Walsh himself says that "the transition from necessary to contingent truths involves a special complication of its own."⁶ Walsh expresses the reason for complication in the following words: "Whereas the results of logic are thought to be immune from subsequent revision, those of other disciplines, except perhaps mathematics, enjoy no such privilege."⁷ These remarks show that the difficulties of Walsh are similar to those of Descartes.

Cartesian question is—How could non-logical, contingent, truths be assimilated to logical, necessary, truths? Failure of assimilation would lead to the failure of the Cartesian criterion of clarity and distinctness. For if there is any truth which cannot be assimilated to an axiomatic system that cannot be deduced from a truth of which mind has a clear and distinct conception, then

the concept of 'knowledge' cannot be applied to that truth. A solution on the Cartesian lines would be that the concept of 'deducibility' is applicable to non-logical truths no less than to logical truths.

Walsh has a solution similar to that of Descartes. It is a general belief that non-logical truths do not exhibit a corporate character as logical truths do. It is because of their lack of corporate character that non-logical truths are open to subsequent revisions. But this belief, according to Walsh, is false. Walsh maintains that non-logical truths, no less than logical truths, exhibit a corporate character.

Descartes proposes the introduction of deducibility even in those disciplines in which deducibility is missing. Walsh proposes the introduction of corporate activity even in those disciplines in which corporate activity is missing. Philosophers are convinced about the futility of the Cartesian proposal. We have simply to see whether the proposal for corporate activity is worth accepting.

Before proceeding further with Walsh, at this point, I would like to consider the view of Professor Daya Krishna. Daya, like Walsh, is bewitched by the Cartesian ideal of scientific respectability. Daya is developing a view that in the genuine sense of the word progress, there has not occurred any progress in the disciplines like art, religion and philosophy etc. Progress has occurred only in sciences. Why is there progress in science but no progress in art, philosophy and religion? Science, according to both Daya and Walsh, is a corporate activity. And it is because science is a corporate activity that the progress of thought in science, according to Daya, is unidimensional. The concept of 'corporate activity' is closely connected with the concept of 'unidimensionality'. According to Daya art, religion and philosophy etc., are dominated by *individual* insights and inspirations; therefore, these disciplines cannot be considered as corporate activities. Thought in these disciplines remains multidimensional. Thus Daya is clearly restricting the concept of 'progress' to the unidimensional progress of thought. Multidimensional progress is no progress. Daya's application of the concept of 'progress' to sciences is based on the same grounds which have led Walsh to

apply the concept of 'knowledge' to sciences. Science is a corporate activity, therefore, there is genuine progress (Daya) and genuine pursuit of knowledge (Walsh) in sciences.⁸

Coming to Walsh, according to the report given by him science has already infiltrated into the territory of non-logical truths, the only question is about the time when it would have complete control over this territory. Walsh refers to nature-study, history, economics, literary criticism and philosophy. I would like to add religion and art to his list of disciplines expressing non-logical truths. This list is not exhaustive; however, it is sufficient for the purpose of explaining the issues in question.

Walsh is quite satisfied with the application of the concept of 'science' to nature study, now technically described as *natural science*. Natural science has succeeded in evolving its *common* academic establishment, and therefore, it is now a corporate activity in the genuine sense of the term. Describing the corporate character of natural science Walsh says, "If someone claims to know something in the sphere of natural science, we all know that his claim cannot succeed unless or until he wins the support of other competent scientists. In the end it is the Royal Society, or the editor of *Nature*, or some similar institution or person commanding the respect of all or most practitioners of the subject which decides whether a certain proposition is to be reckoned part of the body of scientific knowledge."⁹ In his desire to obtain scientific respectability Walsh goes on relaxing conditions slowly till he reaches the stage of consulting only one person (Cartesian situation) for the purpose of deciding the scientificity of a claim. The only restriction is that the person in question is either the editor of *Nature* or one who commands respect in the discipline. But once I am qualified to approve the work of others, I should also be qualified to approve my own work. What makes me qualified to approve the work of others yet disqualified to approve my one work?

What is interesting is not the relaxation of the conditions for obtaining scientific respectability in favour of a claim, but immediately afterwards tightening of these conditions. When Walsh comes to discuss history and economics he introduces very rigid conditions. Individuals, institutions, academics and research

journals, all have to pass certain tests before they are allowed to deliver scientific goods. In discussing the situation in social sciences Walsh withdraws the relaxed atmosphere of natural sciences.

Can history and economics be treated as sciences? Can any social science be described as a science in the real sense of this term. If one does not have a discerning eye one would fail to distinguish natural sciences from history and economics. There are research journals in natural science, so also there are research journals in history. There are institutes devoted to research in natural science, so also there are institutes devoted to research in history. A historiographer, no less than a natural scientist, can command academic respect. What after all is lacking in history which is present in natural science, so that one casts doubt about the scientific character of history? Nothing is lacking in history; only something more is present in history which is not present in natural science. And it is this added element in history which does not allow it to become a science in the genuine sense of the term. So long as there exist 'schools' in history, the learning of history would remain multidimensional, and hence would continue to lack scientific respectability.

To obtain scientific respectability history must become a corporate activity, must acquire unidimensional character. But the existence of 'schools' in history does not allow it to realise this end. Walsh refers to J. B. Bury's lecture on "The science of History" in which Bury makes a "plea for the rapid disappearance of different 'schools' of history."¹⁰ Walsh thinks concerning these 'school,' "until they have in fact disappeared Bury's claim that history is now a science cannot be said to have been fully made out."¹¹ Thus, one's claim to knowledge cannot be granted circulation simply because it has been recommended by an editor of a journal or by the Royal Institute or some similar institution or person commanding academic respect, for the bonafide of the whole discipline in which the claim has been advanced may itself be in question. There is no guarantee that a person possesses a good moral character if he has procured a certificate from the guild of dishonest persons. The situation in economics, according to Walsh, is as disturbing as in history. The regional

tensions are as pervasive in economics as in history. Both of them fall short of the ideal of scientific respectability.

It is perhaps the lack of common academic establishment in history and economics that has led Daya to think that history and economics are not corporate activities, and hence there has been no progress in these disciplines. The status of Toynbee in history may be considered as high as that of Newton in physics. But Toynbee had no Galileo on whose shoulders he could be said to stand. Therefore we have no ground for saying that history has made any progress in spite of the fact that it has succeeded in producing Toynbee. The status of Toynbee in history remains the same as that of Christ or Mohammed in religion. Trevor Roper describes Toynbee as a "scheming Messiah."¹² To some extent Trevor Roper is right, for only a Messiah, and not a scientist, stands on his own shoulders. Toynbee breaks all prevalent criteria of historical research, therefore, historians have thrown him out of their class, and have allowed him to join the class of philosophers.

Suppose Daya is right that there has been no progress in history and economics, because human thought in these fields could not be channelised into one unique direction. But this is his analysis of the past situation. Daya must make a distinction between those disciplines in which progress is impossible (not only that there has been no progress in the past but no progress is possible even in the future) and those in which progress is not ruled out. It seems to me that progress, in Daya's sense of the term, is not possible, is not attainable in religion, art and philosophy. The concept of a corporate religion or corporate art or corporate philosophy is an impossible concept. Could we say the same thing about history or economics? Does Daya share the fears of a Hexter that there is "no hope of a historian's Galileo, Newton or Einstein."¹³ Walsh is not disheartened about the situation in economics, history or even philosophy. I am inclined to accept what Walsh says about history and economics, but not what he says about philosophy.¹⁴

The ideal of scientific respectability seems to be completely missing, at present times, in the cases of subjects like philosophy and literary criticism. Referring to these disciplines Walsh says, "Here much more than in the cases of history and economics

there is a plurality of competing authorities. There is a variety of ways of doing literary criticism or of philosophising, a circumstance which finds its most extreme expression in countries where every literary and philosophical coterie has its own journal in which it prints only work which meets with the approval of its own members."¹⁵ Though Walsh has not considered, he would find the same situation in religion and art. Like philosophy and literary criticism, neither art nor religion has developed any common academic establishment. The flow of religious or artistic consciousness, like that of philosophical consciousness, is multidimensional.

The important question is not that philosophy, religion and art, at this stage of history, happen to be multidimensional, but whether they would ever give up their present character? Could we conceive of a time when philosophy, art and religion become unidimensional and yet retain their distinctive characters?

Buddha was a predecessor of Christ, and Christ a predecessor of Mohammed. But the relation between Christ and Buddha or between Mohammed and Christ is unlike the relation between Newton and Galileo or between Einstein and Newton. Daya would say that there is a genuine progress of thought in science from the time of Galileo to the time of Einstein, that Einstein stands on the shoulders of Newton, and Newton in his own turn on Galileo's. But neither Mohammed nor Christ stand on the shoulders of Buddha, that there is no progress of thought in religion from the time of Buddha to the time of Mohammed. There is a sense in which religion is declining; for such a long time no new Messiah has taken his birth.

The same situation prevails in the field of art. Though two persons were responsible for the birth of Mona Lisa, only one person immortalised her. Crucifixion could produce only one Christ and renunciation only one Buddha. Could art or religion become corporate acts? A corporate act can produce dams, bridges and skyscrapers, but not the immortal smile on the face of Mona Lisa or to bring about the eternal compassion for humanity on the face of a Buddha. If there were two Buddhas or two Mohammeds or two Christs, the world would have been deprived of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. It is to highlight the

individualistic character of artistic and religious consciousness that we allow the world to be the artistic creation of only *one* God.

Could it be doubted that the present situation in philosophy is similar to that which exists in art and religion? However, Walsh is quite optimistic about the future of philosophy, that one day philosophy will certainly achieve the ideal of scientific respectability. He is not discouraged by the situation that philosophers form their independent groups, and cling to their group ideology. As he says, "That philosophers brand together in this way is evidence of their desire for scientific respectability; that there are many such groups, evidence of their failure to achieve their aim."¹⁶ Walsh has picked up Bury's style for exhorting philosophers. As in history so also in philosophy we should give up our group loyalties. Dissolve the school differences and evolve a common academic establishment in philosophy. So long as philosophy remains multidimensional there is no possibility of a genuine pursuit of knowledge.

How would philosophical schools be demolished? How would a nation give up its own mode of philosophising? National prestige is involved; and national prestige on such issues is a matter of natural (environmental) necessity, a necessity imposed by nature.¹⁷ Could we invent a neutral mode of philosophising, a mode that is wholly different from all the existing modes of philosophising? How to change the regional character of philosophy and to convert philosophy into a corporate activity? To answer this question I would again focus my attention on religion. Suppose one considers the proposal of converting religion into a corporate activity. But is this proposal feasible? Either the product of the corporate act is a form of religion or something other than a religion. If it is a religion—where is the Messiah? And if there is a Messiah—where is the corporate act? One would have similar difficulty with philosophy. If the suggestion of Walsh is accepted then we should give up all our present modes of doing philosophy—Platonic, Advaitic, Kantian and Humean etc. We should have philosophy as a corporate activity—an activity which is equally shared by all the philosophers, irrespective of the region to which they belong. The question immediately arises, either the product of the corporate act is a mode of philosophising or some activity other than philosophising. If it is a

mode of philosophising—where is the philosopher? And if there is a philosopher—where is the corporate act? Once a philosopher is introduced, the immergence of a 'school' is inevitable.

I would like now to show that the evolution of academic establishment leads to the decline of 'social assent'. Let me take the situation in art with which even the ordinary people are acquainted. The academic establishment in art—granted that there is some sort of establishment there—has led to the emergence of a new class of technicians. There are artists and there are art-pieces. But the existence of these two varieties of items fails to produce an academic establishment in art. Unless we have art-critics, i.e., those persons who can smell and taste an art-piece and can decide about its artistic value, the academic establishment in art remains incomplete. An art-critic is neither a piece of art nor an artist, he is a necessity introduced by the academic establishment in art. Just as tea and coffee companies cannot operate without employing tea and coffee connoisseurs, the academic establishments in art cannot operate without employing art-critics. The art-critics have a dubious ancestry. Perhaps they came into existence with the rise of the guild-system. Though the guilds have disappeared, their agents continue to exist, having now a more dignified status.

What are the qualifications prescribed for these connoisseurs of art, the caretakers of art—unfortunately described its critics? Consider again the cases of tea and coffee connoisseurs. None can be appointed as a tea-connoisseur in a tea company or a coffee-connoisseur in a coffee company unless his tongue has very sensitive cells for aesthetic taste. Of course, not as sensitive as those of an artist, otherwise he would lose all the academic benefits he obtains from the establishment.¹⁸ Thus whether or not a product of art has obtained perfection does not depend on the assent of the general public (for the general public has very poor cells for aesthetic taste), it depends on the assent of a few art-connoisseurs, i.e., art-critics. The fate of an artist has completely gone into the hands of art-critics. The immortality of an artist does not so much depend on his product as on appearing the art-critics.¹⁹

Walsh has a picture in his mind that the existence of 'schools' and groups in an academic discipline restrict the possibility of 'common social assent' for knowledge. But in having a 'common

academic establishment', by dissolving schools and groups, Walsh is certainly not suggesting the elimination of the class of caretakers of these establishments. With his ideal establishment no less than with an actual establishment the 'common social assent' remains missing, and the pursuit of knowledge remains imprisoned in the hands of a few caretakers of academic establishments.

Do academic establishments promote or thwart the quest for knowledge? I would like to react on this question again by drawing attention to art academies and comparing them with tea and coffee companies. Tea and coffee companies have smuggled, and continue their practice of smuggling, with the help of their tea and coffee connoisseurs, spurious material in the market. Academic establishments in art are no better than these tea and coffee companies. These establishments, with the help of their connoisseurs, are flooding the market with spurious material. There is a general cry about the deteriorating condition of the art-talent through out the world. A good piece of art like a good tin of coffee or a good packet of tea has become a rare commodity these days. As the number of art-critics is increasing the number of good artists is decreasing. If this situation continues to persist a time will come when there will be only art-critics or art-connoisseurs, occupying the position of honour in academic establishments. There will be no artists and no artistic products—only spurious material—within the boundaries of the establishments in art.

If the wish of Walsh is granted for art which he expresses for science and philosophy 'that the academic establishment must exercise... ultimate jurisdiction on what is to count as art', I am afraid, there is hardly any chance for the real work of art to survive. There is no doubt that such a situation would make the world 'safe for art-critics', but only at the cost of artists and their creations. These caretakers of art can always impose the failure in art-perfection on the lack of artistic talent, thus providing an indirect justification for their own smuggling of the spurious material into the market. (Is this true about other disciplines too? Is there any difference in art from literature, philosophy, history and economics etc.? Not only about art, there is a general cry about the deteriorating condition of learning—the lack of talent.). Can there be any progress in art if the existence of art

depends on the existence of academic establishments ? Is 'common social assent' in art the same as 'assent by art-critics' ? Is the society at large deprived of aesthetic sense ? Can aesthetic sense be kept monopolised by those persons who have evolved a technical jargon and are capable of using it ? Does the artistic value of a work of art depend on the technical jargon or on the sensibility of a man ?

What is the function of art-criticism ? How has it come into existence ? So far as their role in the past is concerned we are not very clear about the status of art-critics. They might have acted as agents of the guilds, or a sort of go-between the state or Church and the artists. They might have been evolved for the welfare of the artists. Their function might have been the discovery of the artistic talent by drawing attention of the society or the state or the Church to the artistic creations. Granted that art-criticism had an innocent beginning. But what is its present state ? Art-criticism in our age has itself become an independent academic discipline. It is with the rise of art-criticism as an independent discipline that the troubles started. Consider the present situation. There are giant art-critics, and there are dwarfs. There are those who evolve the technical jargon and there are those who use it. There are those who enjoy the benefits and there are those who suffer for joining the discipline. With the emergence of art-criticism as an independent branch of learning like economics and history etc., artists and art-creations have lost their *physical* importance, they have now only a *symbolic* importance. Somehow art-criticism cannot afford to do away completely with the existence of artists and art-creations, they can only reduce them to a metaphysical level. So it does not matter whether the world has any piece of good art in it, what matters is simply that it has good pieces of art-criticism in it.

Referring to the freedom recently acquired by the artists, the young art-critic Miss Geeta Kapoor points out, "Until the modern period the artist and his product were in the direct services of the Church (or an equivalent priesthood) or the State, in the form usually of an absolute monarchy."²⁰ But have the artists acquired freedom from subjugation even in the so called modern age ? Has not a new Church or a new State or a new set of theologians or a new set of monarchs emerged for subjugating the artists ?

Are not the art-critics a new set of theologians or a new set of monarchs who have occupied the places vacated by the old set of theologians and monarchs? The artists have yet to acquire their freedom from subjugation. And who would desire to be subjugated, to be ruled, if it is an easier task to become rulers? To be an artist, to be subjugated and ruled, is an immensely difficult task to perform. This is perhaps the reason that there is mad-rush to become rulers, to live on the toil of others.

The present situation in philosophy is more complicated than that which exists in art. I am not referring to the state of a country where every academic discipline, including philosophy, is riddled with academic caste-system; where academic perfection is judged by the position one occupies in the academic caste-hierarchy; where family connections, religion, sex, region and school-victories over research abilities, play a major part in the matters of decision about one's position in the academic caste-hierarchy. I am simply referring to a situation, without restricting myself to any region of the world, which has been created by the very nature of the subject called philosophy. Like art and religion, philosophy has numerous styles. A style in philosophy like a style in art, depends on the local conditions, it grows out of those conditions.

The analogy of philosophy with art, however, has its limitations. Fortunately or unfortunately for philosophy it has not yet evolved, like art or literature, an independent class of philosophy-connoisseurs. At present the academic establishment in philosophy is satisfied with the evolution of a class of technicians, a member of which is supposed to perform both the functions—the function of philosophising and of being a connoisseur of philosophy. Imagine that an artist is also an art-critic. Could one have double-dealing, one in art and the other in art-criticism? Could one achieve two perfections? It would be a very rare combination. How could a monarch like to live the subjugated life of its subjects? Most of the heads of philosophy concerns are supposed to have both the perfections. They are philosophers and they are also philosophy-connoisseurs. Over and above their devotion to the activity of philosophising, they have also to look after the management of academic establishments in philosophy. One's entry into an academic establishment follows a very simple

logical principle. The *conclusion* of an argument of the deductive form should not go beyond the range of its *premises*.

So far as the editors of philosophy journals are concerned the cells of their philosophical taste have very limited range. These cells are activated only on those pieces of writing which monkey the editor's own style. It is not only the editors of philosophy journals who exhibit regionalism, even such bodies as the Royal Institute and the Aristotelian Society are regional bodies. It is the combined efforts of all sorts of philosophy-connoisseurs that we have reached the present standards in philosophy.

Who is responsible for bringing and promoting the spurious material in the academic establishments in philosophy? The spurious material has not sprung into the establishments from no where. Can spurious tea or coffee appear in the market without being released by the tea and coffee companies? Who is to be blamed for converting philosophy into a sort of stuff not giving a serious thought? The usual answer of the establishment will be—the general deterioration of philosophical talent.

In such a deteriorating situation as described above one would naturally be led to think that the proper course for the existing establishments in philosophy, its journals and institutions, would be to dissolve them. The philosophical learning requires everything to be started a fresh. (Perhaps the craftsmen of other disciplines would also feel the same.) But this is a solution similar to the one suggested for a political change. If two countries cannot improve the condition of their people and cannot even live as good neighbours, eliminate both of them and establish a new country on those lands by dissolving the territorial boundaries of those countries. (The boundary of British philosophical thought is different from the boundary of Indian philosophical thought). But what is the guarantee that the same situation would not take place in the new country? What is the guarantee that the condition of the people would improve by dissolving the territorial distinctions? Even the territorial conflicts would not be resolved, they would appear in new forms.

The switch from the 'regional academic establishments' to the 'common academic establishment' may take two forms. Either it is a qualitative switch or simply a quantitative switch. If it is

just a quantitative switch then the switch would carry all its old corruptions. Corruptions might even take more violent forms. The situation would improve if it is a qualitative switch. But how is a qualitative switch in philosophy possible? The Walshian suggestion to bring scientific respectability to philosophy is a suggestion for a qualitative switch. But this sort of switch, I have argued elsewhere, is not possible in philosophy.²¹

Let us take for granted that a qualitative switch in philosophy is possible, and that the character of philosophy is completely transformed, and as a result it acquires a new character—the scientific character. But this implies that everything goes well in sciences, that there is no troubled waters in this discipline. Not only that the pursuit of knowledge in science has a common social assent (for such an assent is possible in other subjects too), but that the social assent in science is the *right* or *proper* sort of assent. We must make a distinction between proper and improper sort of assent. An individual, according to Walsh, is not allowed to pursue knowledge in a lonely fashion, he must have a social check. And the proper social check is occurring only in sciences, otherwise there is no necessity for Walsh to suggest that philosophy should obtain scientific respectability. Therefore, to obtain proper social check for one's individual judgements, one must strive to bring scientific respectability to the area of one's pursuit.

Philosophers, historians, economists and literary critics, one and all of them, should strive to make their disciplines scientific. Unless their disciplines have become scientific, their claims do not obtain proper sort of assent. And if not the proper sort of social assent, then their claims are not proper knowledge-claims. It is not only Descartes who is the target of Walsh, the whole history of philosophy is his target. Down from the days of Plato to the days of Walsh what has been written in philosophy lacks proper social assent, for philosophy has not yet achieved the ideal of scientific respectability. For want of proper social assent *knowledge* in its genuine sense has not occurred in philosophy. For the same reasons Daya would say that *progress* in its genuine sense has not occurred in philosophy.

What is the exact situation in science, a discipline so much idealised by Walsh for the genuine pursuit of knowledge? Take the case of Galileo in science. The mere fact that it occurred is

a sufficient ground for thinking that science might have drowned more number of heads than those it has succeeded in rescuing. The cases of Galileo and Frege have led Walsh to refrain himself from granting social assent to become a sufficient condition of knowledge. As he says, "I have not argued that convincing the authorities is a sufficient condition for saying that one knows something."²² The rejection of social assent as a sufficient condition of knowledge, one may think, avoids difficulties against the Walshian theory of knowledge. As Walsh himself says, "The fact that Galileo and Frege were not able to convince their fellow-professors of the truth of their theories should not therefore count decisively against me."²³ Though not sufficient, Walsh continues to accept, though in a half-hearted fashion, that convincing the authorities is a necessary condition of knowledge.²⁴

Could social assent be considered even a necessary condition of knowledge? An *actual* social assent could certainly not be considered as a necessary condition of knowledge, for the theories of Galileo and Frege were rejected by their contemporaries. The authorities, whether on technical or on non-technical matters, commit mistakes. There is no such a thing as an 'infallible authority'. It is only an *ideal* social assent which could be considered as a necessary condition of knowledge. Referring to the difficulty created by the fact that the judges are liable to commit mistakes, Walsh says, "I could avoid this difficulty...if I were willing to make the necessary condition in question approved by an ideal rather than an actual authority."²⁵ But Walsh is not willing to make even an *ideal* social assent as a necessary condition of knowledge. For the reason that "an ideal authority", according to Walsh, "would apply rational standards in adjudicating claims to knowledge, but how do we determine what standards these are? The trouble is that, once we move outside the sphere of necessary truth, no contradiction will be involved in rejecting any given set of standards; there will be nothing internally to command any one consistent set against any other."²⁶ But this implies that the ideal social assent, like the actual social assent, could not be a necessary condition of knowledge.

We have already pointed out while referring to the difficulties of the Cartesian view that it is the sphere of the non-logical, non-necessary, truths that poses a challenge to Descartes. It is inter-

esting to note that the same sphere has introduced difficulties to Walsh, that this sphere does not allow him to accept even ideal social assent to become a necessary condition of knowledge. We cannot accept the Cartesian concept of scientific respectability in terms of an axiomatic system. But we are also driven to reject the Walshian concept of scientific respectability in terms of a corporate activity.

There is a sense in which the position of Descartes remains undisturbed in spite of all the objections of Walsh raised against him. If social assent is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of knowledge, then there is no inconsistency involved in pursuing knowledge in a lonely fashion. The arguments of Walsh against Descartes have clearly failed to show that the "academic establishment must necessarily exercise...ultimate jurisdiction on what is to count as knowledge." If one rejects academic establishment, whatever be the grounds, one may fail to enter into the academic caste-hierarchy, but one cannot be stopped from pursuing a genuine course of knowledge. Rather if one has a genuine quest for knowledge one should not introduce others. In introducing others, as Walsh himself accepts, one is "running the risk of introducing judges whose decisions are at best fallible, at worst arbitrary."²⁷ In pursuing knowledge one should avoid such risks. The world does not after all happen to be as much a safe place for professors as a professor would like it to be.

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NOTES

*The original version of this paper was read at a seminar organised by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, in the month of September, 1976. The material incorporated in this revised version is the direct result of an informal talk given by Professor Daya Krishna at the Institute sometimes in the month of July, 1976. In his talk Daya took up the question of the progress of human thought. In what academic discipline has human thought made any progress, and in what other academic

discipline has it failed to make any progress? This question has led me to react to the views of Walsh along with the views of Daya. Daya's concept of 'Progress' and the concept of 'knowledge' proposed by Walsh involve the same sort of presuppositions. These presuppositions have to be made explicit.

1. "Knowledge in Its Social Setting", *Mind.*, July 1971, p. 330.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 331.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 331.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

5. I have discussed this issue in my article "Individual Versus Social Assent", *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 4, July 1977.

6. Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

7. Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

8. These remarks on Daya's views are based on my mental-diary. Though my mental-diary has never failed me in the past, there is no guarantee that it has not failed me in the present case.

9. Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

10. Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

11. Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

12. This refers to the report given by Ved Mehta about the views of Trevor Roper, in his reputed book *Fly And The Fly-Bottle*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961, p. 91.

13. *Reappraisals In History.*, Longmans, 1961, Peter Leslett's Introduction, p. XI.

14. I stand corrected if I have given a wrong interpretation of Daya's views in this as well as the earlier context.

15. Walsh, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-330.

16. Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

17. I have discussed the question concerning the connection between a philosophical system and the natural environment in my article "Philosophy in Its Environmental Setting", *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 3, April, 1977.

18. A connoisseur is defined in English dictionaries as an 'expert in art or matters of taste.' The analogy of taste with art is not misleading.

19. I have been warned by Miss Geeta Kapoor against my assimilation of 'art-connoisseurs' to 'art-critics'. The academic establishment in art distinguishes 'art-connoisseurs' from 'art-critics' and 'art-historians'. In my attack on the academic establishment in art I am doing away with this technical classification. I have followed the dictionary definition of a connoisseur, for I find the technical classification very unfortunate. The picture of an 'art-critic' is that of a person who rejects and eliminates art rather than of a person who defends and takes care of art. How could one defend or take care of art without having a taste for it, without being a connoisseur of it ?

20. This refers to Geeta's remarks in her paper "The Creative Artist And The Question Of Values" read in the seminar on "Alternative Futures : The Framework of Values" organised by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, June 1976.

21. I have argued against the possibility of a qualitative switch in philosophy in my article "Philosophy In Its Environmental Setting", *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 3, April, 1977.

22. Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

23. Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

24. When Walsh comes to the end of his article, he realises that his case against Descartes is weak. He proposes to show that social assent is a necessary condition of knowledge. But while closing his article he realises that such an assent is "utmost a necessary condition" (*op. cit.*, p. 331), and in no way a sufficient condition of knowledge.

25. *Mind*, July 1971, p. 335.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 336.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 335.